

The 0351 Military Occupational Specialty Realignment

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The 0351 Military Occupational Specialty Realignment
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Introduction.

The realignment of the infantry's military occupational specialty of the 0351 Assaultman was introduced for all the right reasons, but its implementation plan and task distribution missed the mark. Ensuring the correct Marine is performing the correct skill at the appropriate level and that the required knowledge is present within the infantry community has fallen short under the current structure.

Over a several year period both the Infantry Marine Gunners and the Commanders identified at their annual conferences the need to restructure some of the skills and weapon systems within the Assaultman and the Anti-Tank Guided Missileman military occupational specialties. They decided to move both of the anti-tank missile weapon systems, the Javelin missile and the TOW missile to one military occupational specialty: The 0352 Missileman.

Taking the Javelin from the Assaultman allowed for the expansion of the Assaultman's breaching, mobility, and demolitions skills to further support the infantry rifle companys' missions. The need to train and deliver this new Assaultman quickly meant sacrificing training, knowledge base requirements, implementation structuring, and operational forces sustainability. These sacrifices will cause an inaccurate assessment or perception of the abilities of this new

Assaultman. The specific skills that could be misjudged are the new Assaultman's urban mobility breaching tasks, which encompass advanced demolitions skills, and the understanding of building construction to employ these charges.

The current resident experts, the combat engineer community, has all these skills tasked at the sergeant level, where the infantry has implemented several of these skills to be assigned as private and private first class level tasks. Presently, the current infantry leadership lacks the background, experience, training, and in-depth knowledge of these breaching skills to appropriately supervise both training and combat operations of this new Assaultman. The formula of "P" equals plenty will not answer the mail for this equation.

Implementation.

The desire to get these new skills to the operating forces in a timely manner was a significant factor which drove the decision to make the implementation point the entry-level military occupational specialty training at the Infantry Training Battalions within the Schools of Infantry. From this decision several major shortfalls and hazards may occur.

The fact that the basic assaultman courses already existed and would only require restructuring made it the simplest place to begin this transition. But, ease of effort did not make it the best place to begin. The infantry presently does not have

an advanced assaultman course in operations for the non-commissioned officer at the advanced infantry training companies, within the schools of infantry. Thus, in order to put in these new skills at the non-commissioned officer level, it would require the need to develop the advanced assaultman course in total to teach these new skills along with further developing the present assaultman skill set. Although this advanced course is presently being staffed for implementation, the skill set being placed at the entry-level allowed for the execution of the training sooner rather than later. This was believed to allow the flow of these new skills to the operating forces nearly immediately. This speed of execution was a misnomer in hindsight, when the length of time it took to get the entry-level course restructured is taken into consideration. The infantry's time could have been more effectively served by focusing the over two years of planning, staffing, and training conducted in the development and implementation of the entry-level course and by shifting these efforts to the advanced course.

Operating Forces Sustainability.

Who will sustain the Assaultman's training after he reaches the operating forces? Theoretically, new privates will know more about urban mobility breaching than the non-commissioned officer who is leading him into combat. This would not be an

issue if a feasible means to ensure that the skills the young private is executing are the actual skills taught.

Unless the receiving unit has had the opportunity to send their section leader or a leader within the section or platoon to one of the limited schools with the combat engineer or explosive, ordinance, and disposal military occupational specialties, it will be difficult to ensure proper execution. These courses were previously reserved for combat engineers; explosive, ordinance, and disposal specialist; reconnaissance and force reconnaissance Marines, and infantrymen serving in specialized billets within specific units. Due to this shift in the Assaultman military occupational specialty, these courses have been opened up for Assaultman while training command prepares to implement the Advanced Assaultman Course.

The major flaw in this plan lies in the availability of the school seats. The courses are only offered a couple of times a year and all of the types of units listed above are competing for these slots. This also does not take into account the infantry unit's operational tempo and other training requirements in preparations for upcoming deployments, which will also limit the abilities of units to get leaders to these courses. The need for the Advanced Assaultman Course becomes even more critical once these areas are taken into consideration.

Task Distribution.

This brings the discussion back to what is really the appropriate level to task Assaultmen with the responsibility of accomplishing this new skill set. The implementation of this new Assaultman has left out the concept of any type of training continuum. To non-infantrymen it may also appear that the infantry may have glossed over or completely disregarded the current resident experts in making the decision of what level to teach what skills, in turn displaying ignorance within the field.

It can be argued that the construction of most of these urban breaching charges is not difficult. However, it is the associated skills that go along with employing these charges that can become rather complex. An individual not only has to understand what type of charge to use, but also how to calculate the appropriate amount of explosives to use in order to accomplish a specific task. They must calculate what should be the standoff from the charge due to the amount of explosives. They need to understand the makeup of the building materials associated with a specific structure. Furthermore, they must know the amount of explosives needed to minimize not only the blast for standoff, but also to minimize collateral damage inside the structure. This is very relevant, because if one was not concerned about collateral damage to the structure and the

individuals inside, a dynamic breaching charge or urban mobility breaching charge may not be the most logical means of entry into the structure. The unit could use a rocket to gain entry in this case, allowing greater standoff prior to making entry. There would be no need to move an individual right up to the structure to emplace it, potentially exposing that person to enemy fire.

Additionally, the entry-level Marine currently only receives a couple of the urban breaching charges to make entry. A specific charge is used on specific types of structures and at different points. With a limited skill set, the entry-level Marine may use an inappropriate type of charge in an inappropriate place, at an inappropriate time, thus increasing risk to the unit and increasing collateral damage to the structure and the individuals inside. An individual with a small amount of information about a subject and believes he has a great deal of knowledge concerning that subject, is extremely dangerous.

Training Continuum.

If the infantry community was to look at the combat engineer's career progression and training continuum, the infantry would see a well defined, progressive training continuum. The infantry also does has a defined training continuum with most of its military occupational specialties,

but seems to have overlooked the Assaultman. The engineers begin their education on the use of demolitions at the engineer basic course. The non-commissioned officers course follows this where their skills are further developed. Also introduced at the non-commissioned officer level, is the Urban Breacher's Course, focusing on teaching leaders how to train their Marines in urban breaching skills and how to identify hazards associated with these skills. They also teach these breaching skills to their officers at the Officer Engineer Course and further their skills by sending them to the Advanced Assault Breacher's Course, run by Weapons Training Battalion in Quantico, Virginia.

Presently within the infantry, the staff non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers do not receive this training at the infantry unit leaders course or at the infantry officers course respectively. What this means is to properly sustain the training of this new Assaultman, the infantry community will need to rely on the combat engineers to assist in conduct training. This will be the only way to ensure safe and proper procedures are being executed. This could pose the question from the engineer community of why make this new capability in the Assaultman and why not just make more combat engineers to augment the infantry units? This is no more the answer than putting the inappropriate skills at the infantry entry-level. These are skills that are needed with the infantry itself,

because even if more engineers were created for this intention, different commanders could choose to task organize their Marine Air Ground Task Force differently and prioritize engineers to an area that the commander finds to be more critical to the mission; once again leaving the infantry with a shortfall for this capability. The new Assaultman is most definitely needed, but the leadership needs to be trained to accept this Marine, train him, and sustain him properly.

Current Entry-Level Training.

What is also missing from the entry-level implementation plan are assets and time to properly train the Assaultman in these areas. One would think that in order to instruct these skills correctly, the student would need to know how to perform the task in several different scenarios and on several different types of targets; at least one time. Just the monetary cost of each student breaking a single and double pane window and detonating a charge on a wood and metal door must be considered and is substantial. If there were eighteen students in each class, with twenty-one classes per year, on both the east and west coast, the Schools of Infantry would need to have one thousand five hundred twelve of both doors and windows for the course each year. This doesn't include any type of remediation for students who do not perform the task correctly the first time.

Additionally, due to the fact of only fifty-two days, with thirty-nine training days to train an entry-level infantryman, which also includes several other Assaultman and common skills training tasks, there would not be the time to have each student perform all of these charges, on all of the different types of targets during live-fire. Subsequently, because of the resource and time limitations, the student during live-fire will have to help construct a couple of charges in a group and may have the opportunity to employ one. This does not seem adequate, especially seeing as the current leadership within the operating forces most likely will not have performed these tasks before.

Conclusion.

All of the proposed tasks associated with the Assaultman realignment are sound and will improve the infantry community's capabilities, but the majority of the new tasks and skills have little place in the entry-level training pipeline in their present form. What is most important for the junior Marine should be readdressed and more adequately allocated. The infantry needs to build this new Assaultman with a more progressive plan. It should not consist of a plan that puts out a product that leaves the receiving unit with a misconception of these Marines true capabilities. It must start in the appropriate place, with the appropriate people to ensure these new Marines are employed correctly and are truly effective on

the battlefield and not a potential hazard. If the leaders are not in place, everyone is set up for failure. The greatest potential hazard that may exist with the current structure is the leader who understands what skills the junior Marine has been taught but does not understand his real limitations, subsequently the leader may choose to employ this Marine, in turn possibly endangering everyone. Knowledge is only power if the correct individuals have it.

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